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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001310

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TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM KPKO CG ELECTIONS

SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS: GIZENGA AN EMERGING FORCE

REF: KINSHASA 1195

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

**¶1.** (C) Summary: Antoine Gizenga, secretary general of the Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU), met with the Ambassador August 17. The long-time opposition figure, who almost certainly will likely place third in the first round of presidential voting and is the potential kingmaker in a second round, said elections will help restore the sovereignty of the Congolese people. Gizenga said he and his party do not want to see the DRC descend into violence once again, and that he is encouraging his followers not to respond to any "provocation" once results are announced. Despite the current speculation of a Congo divided along East-West lines, Gizenga believes no such division exists. Well-spoken and even-tempered, Gizenga has emerged as a power both Kabila and Bemba will court heavily, although the PALU leader is playing his cards close to his chest. End summary.

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GIZENGA CALLS ON ALL TO RESPECT RESULTS  
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**¶2.** (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by DCM and PolOff, met August 17 in Kinshasa with PALU Secretary General Antoine Gizenga, one of the DRC's 33 presidential candidates, as a follow-up to a broader meeting Gizenga had with CIAT members August 9. According to preliminary election results provided by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), the 81-year-old Gizenga is currently in third place behind President Joseph Kabila and Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba. Gizenga spent much of the 90-minute meeting reviewing his and his party's long struggle in the Congo since the country gained independence in 1960. Gizenga hopes the July 30 elections will serve to restore the sovereignty of the Congolese people and create a democratic state based on the rule of law. Gizenga added that people need to realize the results of these elections will not last forever, noting there will be future elections. Gizenga agreed that the July 30 contest was only the first step in rebuilding the DRC and that the process of establishing peace and unity throughout the country would be long. Though not directly commenting on results of the first round, Gizenga's comment suggested he expects there to be a second round runoff.

**¶3.** (C) Gizenga said he hopes all candidates in the presidential contest understand the need to be calm before the announcement of results, and to accept those results. Gizenga said he thought too many people were focused only on who will come in first, forgetting that there will be many losers. He said politicians must understand that voters want their leaders to respect election results and not resort to violence afterwards.

¶ 14. (C) Gizenga said the country's political system needs to be transformed from one based on individuals to one formed around strong groups and political parties with clear ideologies. The long-time opposition leader said most of the DRC's 33 presidential candidates represented no more than a handful of people and asked rhetorically what most candidates and parties have as a base of support throughout the country.

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NO WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE EXPECTED  
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¶ 15. (C) Gizenga said he does not expect there to be widespread violence after provisional results are announced by the CEI. (Note: The CEI is expected to release nationwide provisional vote tallies from the presidential contest on August 20. End note.) He has told his followers not to respond to any "provocation" to violence which may occur in the following weeks. Though he thought there may be some pockets of unrest, particularly in Kinshasa, he believes any acts of violence would be isolated and would not have much support. In fact, Gizenga implicitly criticized the violence which took place in Kinshasa July 27 following a rally of the MLC (ref A).

¶ 16. (C) Gizenga said PALU has deliberately remained silent on recent events, enhancing the party's credibility and helping maintain calm and patience among the party's followers. PALU members are not inclined to commit destructive acts, he claimed, noting that the party can set an example to others with regard to peaceful demonstrations and the rule of law. Gizenga said that those who take up arms are influenced by "outside forces," as most Congolese do not support a return

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to violence.

¶ 17. (C) Gizenga pledged as well to work within the system should the need for any electoral challenges arise. He did not claim, as many other candidates have, that the elections were marred by "irregularities" or that election workers have committed widespread fraud. If his party does identify cases of potential fraud, he said, it will follow all procedures through legal means. Gizenga pointedly recalled that PALU had strongly opposed the 50,000 USD registration fee required for presidential candidates, but after realizing its appeal was not being heard, accepted the law as it stood and did not react violently.

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EAST-WEST DIVIDE NOT REAL  
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¶ 18. (C) Gizenga said he does not accept current theories of an East-West schism in the DRC. He explained that the idea of an East-West division comes from those people who want to divide the country so as to exploit its wealth and resources. Moreover, he said that as a result of the country's civil war (based largely in the east), many intellectuals became fixed on the belief that the East was "bad" while the West was "good." In any case, Gizenga said most Congolese do not believe in this division either. Gizenga said PALU has long had a vision of one country, unified by one national language (Swahili) and one national identity.

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COMMENT: AN EMERGING KINGMAKER  
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¶ 19. (C) While a relatively marginal figure during the DRC's transition, Gizenga is emerging as an important force and potential kingmaker in the likely second round of presidential elections. He is of course aware of his new-found stature, and made sure to hit all the right notes, projecting himself as someone willing to accept election results and work within the system for the overall good of

the country. Gizenga appeared to be healthy, alert and engaged, belying his reported age of 81 years (a marked contrast to recent reports concerning the DRC's other primary political opposition figure, Etienne Tshisekedi of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress). Clearly both Kabila and Bemba, the two candidates to face off in an eventual second round, will be courting Gizenga and PALU heavily. Gizenga began the meeting with a pointed anti-Mobutu comment, suggesting that any possible alliance with Bemba would be problematic. That said, a PALU alliance with Kabila is not an obvious fit and is far from certain at this point. Gizenga is for now, though, keeping his counsel. End comment.

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